

# Title: Gender, Public Space and Resistance

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## Abstract:

On May 27, 2013 at 11:30 pm bulldozers drove into Gezi, a central park in Taksim, Istanbul, to uproot five trees in preparation for future construction. Plans for the redevelopment had been announced two years before by the Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and in response, two local activist groups had been formed: 'Taksim Solidarity' and the 'Society for the Preservation and Beautification of Gezi Park'. Founded to publicise the historical status of the park and protect what remains a symbolically important site - and one of the few recreation areas in the central area of Istanbul - members of these groups were amongst the first to protest as the bulldozers rolled in. Within hours, a group of twenty to thirty activists had begun a sit-in.

In the coming days, as the number of demonstrators increased to hundreds, the 'resistance' spread to other neighbourhoods in Istanbul. It also manifest itself in other cities across the country. The small scale sit-in that commenced in the night of May 27th had become a catalyst for a nationwide movement with global repercussions. It subsequently became known, interchangeably, as the Gezi movement, the Gezi resistance and Gezi events. The space of the protests was no longer bounded by Gezi Park itself, and the movement was no longer limited to a specific and local planning agenda.

Taking criticism of the renovation plans for Taksim as their starting point, the protesters also raised their voices against what they considered the authoritarian policies of the the conservative government and, more specifically, the social pronouncements of the Prime Minister. The governmental response was violent police intervention. Within a month, five protesters and one policeman had died, hundreds of others were injured, and many protestors were arrested across the country. In the midst of what the government defined as anarchy and subversive acts, multiple social and cultural assumptions were overturned and, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, events and behaviours were deterritorialized. Transient actions in established spaces smoothed the striated spaces of government planning and, equally significantly, a radical and momentary reconceptualisation of gendered roles and spaces was established.